

VZCZCXRO3897
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHPG #1505/01 3471132
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 131132Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8345
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1795
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 001505

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

EUR/NCE FOR FICHTE, PM FOR DOWLEY, OSD FOR SADOWSKA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [AF](#) [NATO](#)
SUBJECT: CZECHS PLAN INCREASED SUPPORT FOR ISAF: MILITARY
HOSPITAL IN 2007, PRT IN 2008

REF: A. PRAGUE 1466
[1](#)B. PRAGUE 1423
[1](#)C. PRAGUE 283
[1](#)D. PRAGUE 225

Classified By: Political Counselor Michael Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: On December 20 the Czech government is likely to formally adopt a plan to create a Czech PRT at Pol-e-Khomri, Afghanistan, to take over from Hungary in 2008. Many of the details such as civilian component, financing, and partners still need to be worked-out, but the Czechs will likely provide their PRT with helicopter support. There is also a strong chance that sometime in 2007 the Czech Republic will send a 70-man military field hospital to Afghanistan, a commitment that would be in addition to the 225 personnel already authorized by the parliament. End summary.

The Plans: PRT at Pol-e-Khomri in 2008,
Military Hospital in Kabul in 2007

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met with MFA Security Policy Director Veronika Smigolova on December 12 to solicit further information on Czech plans to potentially lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan beginning in 2008 and to possibly deploy a military hospital in 2007. Smigolova indicated that the PRT plan is for approximately 100 Czech troops, accompanied by an unspecified number of Czech civilians and troops from other countries to take over the Hungarian PRT at Pol-e-Khomri. The Czech military hospital would potentially comprise approximately 70 personnel and would operate in Kabul.

PRT: A Decision in the Political Pipeline

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Smigolova shared that after a long spring and summer of working-level meetings between the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and the General staff, the General Staff had gradually begun to warm to the idea of leading a PRT. Crucially, new Defense Minister Jiri Sedivy has been an enthusiastic supporter of the project, helping to move those who were more cynical about the endeavor. FM Sasa Vondra had in the past been skeptical about the wisdom of allied operations in Afghanistan, seeing it as a Russian problem

that had been adopted by the West in recent years. However, he is fully prepared to support Czech operations at this stage.

14. (C) Smigolova said that a formal plan has now been agreed between the ministries, and the Cabinet is scheduled to formally adopt a decision to go forward with a Czech PRT on December 20. However, she acknowledged that the ongoing process of government formation could possibly interfere with that date. Smigolova was cautiously optimistic that any government that emerged in future months would maintain support for the creation of this PRT.

Personnel, Finances, and Partners:
The Devil is in the Details

15. (C/NF) Smigolova shared that the document to be approved by the Cabinet was deliberately vague in many areas, in order to obscure differences that remained between the ministries. The Ministry of Defense (MOD) is pressing for a strong civilian component, an idea supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) with the caveat that a strong8 can mean strength in sense of the financial ability to do development rather than in the literal sense of having large numbers of civilians on the ground without sufficient justification. (Note: Embassy sources indicate that a large gap remains between the MFA and MOD on this issue, with some in the MOD maintaining that a PRT in Pol-e-Khomri be majority civilian. End note)

16. (C) According to Smigolova the Ministry of Finance has not

PRAGUE 00001505 002 OF 003

yet developed a comprehensive plan to finance the PRT, although the direct costs to the military will likely be paid from the regular defense budget. Individual ministries will be asked to contribute to civilian component operations (Note: This is another point of discord within the Czech government. The MOD is pressing for separate funding allocations from Parliament for some of its foreign operations as a means of supplementing the declining defense budget. End note).

17. (C/NF) Smigolova acknowledged that the issue of partners needs plenty of work. Slovakia appears willing to contribute only approximately 20 troops and the Czechs are in favor of casting the net widely to see what contributions are available from other sources. Negotiations with Croatia are likely. Smigolova also said that Serbia had in the past mentioned a potential willingness to provide troops for a Czech-led PRT in Afghanistan, something that appeared more likely in the wake of the Partnership For Peace (PFP) offer made at Riga. However, Smigolova did not consider Serbian participation a likelihood, especially in light of the inevitable tensions that will accompany the January announcement of UN envoy Ahtisaari's proposals on end-status for Kosovo.

18. (C/NF) The Czechs would likely provide their own helicopter support to the PRT. Early in 2006 the UK had pushed the Czechs hard to plan to provide rotary-wing airlift to British troops in Afghanistan. Instead the Czech helicopters in question are likely to be sent to Kosovo in 2007 with the notional plan that they be part of the Czech PRT effort in Afghanistan in 2008.

A PRT Means a Reduction,
Not an End, to Other Missions

19. (C/NF) Smigolova shared that, contrary to prior indications, the establishment of a Czech PRT would not mean the end of Czech participation in other missions in

Afghanistan. She said that the Czech contribution to the German PRT at Feyzabad would be significantly reduced, but Czech participation would continue. (Note: Part of the initial MOD resistance to establishing a Czech PRT came from the Czech need for a German headquarters to support the 2009 establishment of a Czech Battlegroup under ESDP. The Czech MOD felt that the Germans would be less willing to offer a headquarters facility if the Czechs had withdrawn their ISAF troops from Feyzabad. The Germans have by now already promised the headquarters will be available to the Czech Battlegroup, leaving the Czechs confident that a partial drawdown at Feyzabad will not have an impact on their ESDP commitments. End note)

Military hospital deployment to
Kabul in 2007 becoming more likely

¶10. (C) Smigolova confirmed rumors in both the MFA and the MOD that the Czech government may ask Parliament for authorization to send a military hospital to Afghanistan in ¶2007. This authorization would be for additional troops beyond those already approved in the 2007 deployments bill (ref A). Initial planning is still ongoing, but the deployment could encompass possibly 70 Czech personnel with all the equipment necessary to set up a military field hospital. Smigolova claimed that this possible deployment, which had not been widely considered before, had become an issue as a result of the insistent requests of Czech military hospital personnel to be deployed. Airlift requests for the hospital were likely to be made multilaterally at NATO, but a bilateral request to the United States for airlift might be made if allies could not help the Czechs meet this demand.

Comment

¶11. (C/NF) Embassy Prague has long lobbied for the Czechs to step up their efforts in Afghanistan. Despite the optimism

PRAGUE 00001505 003 OF 003

from the MFA, the process of government formation has the potential to hinder the formal decision-making process surrounding the deployment of Czech troops. The Embassy will continue to encourage prompt governmental action in order to bringing sufficient resources to bear in Afghanistan. End comment.
GRABER